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THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE.

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THE G.A.R. WATCH.

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## A GLOOMY OUTLOOK.

We are forced to the conclusion that as we

go to press the prospect for legislation at this

session to carry out the recommendations of

the National Pension Committee of the

G.A.R. is not at all favorable. This is largely

due to the attitude of the President, and to

the conviction that he will veto any

general pension bill that may be

presented to him, always excepting the

Mexican Pension Bill. It was this feeling

that induced the Senate to pass the Mexican

Pension Bill without the amendments that

were formerly insisted upon, and which in-

cluded the recommendations of the National

Pension Committee. The latter has done a

splendid work before both Houses, and if it

had been possible to get any general bill

through it would have secured the passage of

the greater part of its recommendations. As

it is, the hostility of the President will

force the denial of relief to disabled

veterans for at least another year. The

broken-down soldiers who are now eating

the bread of penury and sorrow in the poor-

houses, will have to exist on alms many

weary months more until some influence

can be brought to bear to soften the heart

of this political Pharaoh, and of the soldier-

hating Members of the House of Repre-

sentatives.

GEN. BLACK AS COMMISSIONER OF

PENSIONS.

THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE has but one

final test for every public man. We con-

cede at the outset that every man who as-

pires to serve the people must have ability,

integrity and patriotism; but such a conces-

sion is unnecessary, since that is a point upon

which every one agrees. Starting, then, with

these qualities as a groundwork of character,

the further test to which we claim he must

be subject is his friendship for the veterans,

and his earnestness in making that friend-

ship bear real fruit. So long have the sol-

diers been fed "windy aspirations of forced

bravery" that the grateful, meaty flavor of

actual performance is now required to give

earnest to the profuse protestations of the

candidate for the favor of the public and of

THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE, which is the or-

gan and representative of so large a portion

of the public.

To any one who reads the paper this pre-

face is hardly necessary. Whoever has

watched the course of THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE

needs not to be told that party lines

count for nothing with us, but service for

the soldier everything. The man who is a

faithful friend of the soldier is praised and

supported, no matter what his partisan

affiliations; the enemy of the soldier is op-

posed and denounced, regardless of his po-

litical sympathies or previous history. Be

the official Republican or Democrat, Green-

backer or Labor Reformer, Protestant or

Catholic, Jew or Gentile, bond or free, if he

is the friend of the veteran THE NATIONAL

TRIBUNE is his friend, supporter and elo-

quist. On the other hand, though he speak

with the tongue of men and of angels, though

he prophesy and know all wisdom and all

strange things, though he give his goods to

the poor and his body to the burned, yet if

he love not the soldier and be willing to

help him he is as sounding brass and a

tinkling cymbal.

All our readers will testify that we have

not hesitated to attack the highest in the

land when they were unjust or unfriendly

to those who saved the Nation. Nor have

we hesitated to praise, when they brought

forth fruits meet for repentance, those whom

in other days we had most reason to hate.

We make this premise preparatory to giving

Gen. Black the praise that is rightfully

deserved for the splendid work he has done

for the soldiers of the country in the 15

months that he has discharged the functions

of Commissioner of Pensions. When he

entered the office he modestly told the G.A.R.,

National Pension Committee and other prom-

inent friends of the soldiers that he wanted

them to wait a year and let his work

speak for him. He could well afford to do

so. From the moment that he entered upon

his duties it was evident that a stronger

hand was on the helm than had ever grasped

it before. A new impulse began straining

the old, hide-bound technicalism that had

long reigned there, and that impulse has

gone on gathering strength and impetus up

to this moment. The steady increase,

from week to week and from month

to month, of the business transacted

has not been irregular and fitful, which

would indicate that it has been effected by

adventitious or outside influences, but has

been a regular, steady growth, such as could

only come from a systematic perfecting of

the details of the machinery, and an intelli-

gent supervision of the whole system, with

a strengthening and improvement wherever

strengthening and improvement were needed.

Long-standing obstacles have been patiently

investigated and carefully removed, abuses

handed down from one Commissioner to

another have been done away with, simple

Number of Certificates issued during years ending

June 30, 1883-84-85-86. Miscellaneous certificates

not included.

	1883.	1884.	1885.	1886.
Original	38,161	34,190	33,771	40,632
Increase	8,073	15,137	25,345	25,775
Release	2,284	2,302	4,392	4,829
Restoration	1,107	1,264	1,838	2,214
Duplicate	842	1,291	941	842
Accrued	1,515	2,052	2,096	2,237
Total	52,978	56,729	70,386	79,534

That is, 9,268 more original and increase

certificates were issued last year than in

1885; 12,825 more than in 1884; and 16,675

more than in 1883. And to these must be

added 93,000 widows' certificates hereafter

pointed out, a total in one year of over

172,000 certificates!

To put it in another shape:

The working efficiency of the office is

shown to be about 14 per cent. greater than

it was last year, about 19 per cent. greater

than it was in 1884, and nearly 30 per cent.

greater than in 1883.

Gen. Black entered upon the duties of his

office March 17, 1885, and during the period

from that date to June 30, 1886, the end of

the fiscal year, 45 per cent. of the pensions

which were allowed during the entire fiscal

year were allowed under Gen. Black's ad-

ministration.

Formerly, if at any time after the pension

was granted, the pensioner came into posses-

sion of property, or was able to take care of

himself without the pension, it ceased and

he could not be thereafter pensioned, even

though he should be in a condition of abso-

lute want.

Another very liberal ruling of Gen.

Black was to the effect that dependent

mothers and fathers were entitled to their

pension whenever it again became necessary

as a means of comfortable support, or deduc-

tion only for the period when they were able

to maintain themselves without it. Thus

the pension could cease, and in after years

could be resumed, providing, of course, they

were otherwise entitled.

This is a showing in which any official can

take just pride.

As this enlarged efficiency meant granting

long-denied justice and relief to more than

70,000 deserving soldiers, their widows and

orphans, ministering to their sore need, and

lifting them in most cases from abject penury

to some degree of comfort; as it meant a

great hastening of that relief which, to be

of any value, must be given quickly; as it

meant a breaking down of that cruel policy

of delay which, to the helpless veteran's

heart, is sharper than a serpent's tooth, it is

something over which the whole body of the

veteran soldiery of the country should re-

joice and give thanks that at last there is

found a Commissioner of Pensions who has

the will and the power to redeem the oft-

broken promise of the Nation to care in his

hour of need for him who has borne the

battle, and for his widow and his orphan.

Nor is it alone in the number of pensions

granted that Gen. Black has done well.

Greater liberality is shown by the increased

average amount allowed. In the year before

he came into office the average value of each

pension was \$106.75. The first year after

he came in this was raised to \$110.36, and

for the year just closed will show a still more

notable increase.

Gen. Black's rulings have ever tended to-

ward a relaxation of iron-bound technicalism

in favor of just liberality. Conspicuous

among these are his rulings in regard to

disabilities in rebel prisons. No records

exist of most of the rebel prisons, and con-

sequently there is not a shred of document-

ary evidence extant to show that nine-tenths

of the men who suffered imprisonment ever